

Sierra Foothills Unitarian Universalists

Board of Trustees

April 21, 2021

Meeting Minutes

Those in attendance: Maureen Bauman (President), Marsha von Dessonneck (Vice President), Geoff Smith (Financial Officer), Rick Marshall (Secretary), Suzanne Borth, John Bohland, Rick Ross, Rev. AJ van Tine (ex-officio), Gary Koerner (Treasurer, ex-officio)

John provided a reading for the lighting of the chalice. All those present checked in.

1. Finance

Gary provided a review of the financial reports for March. Pledge income is on target. Most expenses are fixed amounts; we are slightly under budget overall.

Gary also provided a review of the draft Budget for FY 2021-22. The budget was developed by the Finance Committee assuming that half the year would remain in virtual operations, and half would resume in-person operations. The bottom line is a proposed \$15,000 deficit for the year. We would use some of the current \$28,000 surplus to do this, and plan to turn it around before the surplus is gone in future years. Highlights of the proposed budget:

- Pledge income \$160,000 (current \$165,000; prior years as high as \$180,000)
 - It was noted that those who have pledged have raised their pledges by an average of 9%
- \$3,000 from Share-the-Plate
- \$15,000 from fundraising
- Staff salaries include 1.8% cost-of-living adjustment
- Committee budgets same as current year
- New contract minister – assume 10.5 months salary payments
 - Current estimate based on assumption of \$75,000 annual salary, pending negotiations
 - Negotiations will set salary, benefits, moving expenses
 - No sabbatical applies to Contract ministry (only Called ministry)
- 6 guest speakers per year
- License fees to stream music
- Providing child care for ½ year

The deficit is mostly due to pledge income being lower than historic levels. Natural attrition in membership is not being offset by adding new members during virtual operations. Using the surplus to cover this is “investing in our future” by sustaining full-time ministry.

Potential future major expenses, like roof repair/replacement, will need their own separate fundraising efforts. Use of the Endowment Fund is also a possibility to be considered for such expenses.

Some of the figures will change slightly from the current draft budget (e.g., specific amount for UUA dues). The Board will take final action on the proposed FY 2021-22 Budget at its May meeting.

A budget forum is being scheduled for June 6 after church. Gary will be gone, but will see if Jim Robison can cover for him. Board members will also be able to answer questions that day.

The Annual Meeting of the Congregation will be June 13 after church. "Save the Date" notices have already been sent. The official meeting notice can go out after the Board's May 19 meeting and satisfy the Bylaws timing requirements.

2. Minutes

The Board reviewed the draft Minutes from the March 17 meeting.

Suzanne moved, Marsha seconded, to approve the March 17 Minutes as presented. Passed unanimously.

3. Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Board of Trustees will be Wednesday, May 19 at 6:00 p.m. Maureen will provide opening words.

4. Thank You Notes

The Board will send a Thank-You note to Amy Evans for her work heading up the Search Committee, as well as her ongoing work leading the Worship Associates Circle, and the new work with the Audio-Visual Task Force.

GEOFF WILL SEND THIS THANK-YOU NOTE.

5. Commission on Institutional Change Report

The Board continued its review of the report, "Widening the Circle of Concern," specifically the section on Innovations and Risk-Taking. Discussion points included:

- Changes in what will interest younger members
- Trend is away from all-white communities, yet UU congregations are still largely all-white
- Liked the Q&A section – educational philosophy of asking "why?"
- Motivated by a clear goal
- Practical recommendations – sharing success stories, funding training on use of music and worship materials with cultural competence, awareness of different economic status of those we wish to see move into leadership roles
- The "avatar" story represents real things that have occurred in UU circles
- There is still a wide diversity of viewpoints within the larger UUA organization

6. Pandemic Recovery Task Force

The Task Force provided recommendations regarding small group gatherings in response to the Board's request at its March meeting. The following points were raised in discussion of these recommendations:

- Rev. AJ acknowledged that after the Task Force had approved its recommendations, he became less comfortable with those based on various additional information he received. He raised those concerns with the Task Force membership but received no response from them.
- Rev. AJ recommended that the criteria permitting small group gatherings under California's Red (Substantial) tier (or better) be modified to permit them only under the Orange (Moderate) tier (or better). He is concerned since case rates are again trending upward since the Task Force meeting.
- We may need to begin using another status reference, as California has announced it plans to stop using the "Tier" system in June. One possible source is www.covidactnow.org which was recommended by various ministerial colleagues.
- Small-group gatherings would still require masks, distancing, etc.
- The CDC is currently recommending that people not gather with anyone who does not live with them.
- Many congregations are exploring ways for small groups to gather in outdoor settings.
- Support was expressed for the Task Force recommendations as presented.
- Resuming large group gathering (e.g., Sunday worship) is what our members are worried about the most.
 - We can hold off the demand for this longer if we are more lenient with the criteria for small groups
 - Large group gatherings will need to wait until children can be vaccinated
 - Some people really need contact and connection
- People need something physical; in an informal poll by one Board member, people expressed a need to be back in person soon.
 - There is a strong demand for this
 - A risk of losing the congregation unless this is allowed quickly
- We don't need to wait until everyone is vaccinated, if we use precautions.
- Support was expressed for the idea of meeting outdoors – we need to think about where and how this might be accomplished.
- The Board previously discussed conducting a survey of members to assess their comfort and risk levels. There are some examples out there. We should start with this to get a feel for where our congregation is coming from.
- There are several people in the congregation who do not agree with gathering under current conditions. They need to be heard.
- We will need to set a policy somewhere, then see where people are in relation to it.
- We should go forward with the proposed small group policy, then start working on the large group approach. There are many questions to be addressed for that.
- We should start doing the survey and small group discussions.
- Support was expressed for a more-conservative approach. Resuming in-person operations under current conditions is exclusionary, especially to families with children.
- The proposed 30-person cap on small group size seems too high.
- It is OK to get a sense of the congregation's feelings about gathering criteria and requirements, but we also need to follow science, CDC guidance and our values.
- We want to honor the decision of the Task Force that developed the recommendations.
- Small groups may be gathering anyway, in the absence of guidance from us.

- Concerns about the case-rate trajectory in the county stem from people not wearing masks, not distancing, etc. Our proposed policy would address these concerns for SFUU.

Rick M moved, Marsha seconded, to modify the proposed cap on small group size from 30 to 15. Passed on a vote of 6-1, with Rick R opposed.

Rick M moved, Suzanne seconded, to approve the proposed policy as amended (group size cap 15), keeping the Red (Substantial) Tier as the threshold. The Board discussed the motion and the need to be able to “speak with one voice” once the action is finalized. Following discussion, the motion was modified.

Rick M moved, Suzanne seconded, to approve the proposed policy as amended (group size cap 15), modifying the threshold to the Orange (Moderate) Tier. Passed on a vote of 6-0-1, with John abstaining.

The Board asked the Task Force to take up the topic of how to handle gatherings in outdoor spaces.

RICK M WILL CONVEY THIS REQUEST TO THE TASK FORCE FOR ITS SCHEDULED MAY 11 MEETING.

The Board will move forward with conducting a survey of the congregation. Various names were suggested as people that might help develop the question format – Tricia Caspers, Mary Piette, Laurie Soper. Rick R indicated that Tricia is probably too busy to participate in this.

MAUREEN WILL CONVENE A GROUP TO DEVELOP THE SURVEY QUESTIONS. SUZANNE WILL ASSIST WITH PUTTING THE QUESTIONS INTO A TECH FORM (SURVEY MONKEY, GOOGLE FORMS, ETC.) VICKY JUNGERS WILL BE INVITED TO BE PART OF THIS AS WELL.

7. General Assembly

Suzanne reported that no one has contacted her to volunteer to be a Delegate for SFUU. She contacted Abby Warner about being a Youth Delegate (she’s the only one in the eligible age group in SFUU) and she is not available. Suzanne did learn that she can transfer her registration \$ credit to another person. There was a suggestion that committee chairpersons might be good ones to approach for this.

MARSHA WILL RAISE THIS POSSIBILITY AT THE COMMITTEE COUNCIL MEETING ON APRIL 22.

8. Search Committee

Maureen reported that there is no news. The process is moving along, and the committee is hoping to have a decision next month (or sooner).

9. Thinking Ahead

a. Audio-Visual Task Force – It is proposed to form a group specifically to look into the necessary technology requirements for “multi-platform operations.” (This is the new term for what had been being called “hybrid” services.)

The new Task Force is charged with establishing a way to have multi-platform services, which will allow people to be connected. They are to develop the technology needs (hardware and

software) and make a budget for these items. If there are concerns about health and safety aspects of multi-platform operations, they will refer these to the existing Pandemic Recovery Task Force.

Maureen moved, Marsha seconded, to establish the new Audio-Visual Task Force consisting of Suzanne Borth, Ian Duncan and Amy Evans. Passed unanimously.

b. Communication strategy

REV. AJ WILL WORK WITH VICKY TO DEVELOP AN APPROACH TO KEEPING THE CONGREGATION INFORMED OF THE CURRENT ACTIVITIES IN PANDEMIC RESPONSE AND THE MINISTERIAL SEARCH.

10. Committee Liaison Reports

MARSHA WILL PREPARE A SUMMARY OF THE APRIL 22 COMMITTEE COUNCIL MEETING AND SEND TO BOARD MEMBERS BY EMAIL.

11. Minister's Report

Appreciation was expressed for Rev. AJ's increased efforts in pastoral calling.

The Board reviewed **ACTION ITEMS**, Right Relations for this meeting, and extinguished the chalice.

MINUTES PREPARED BY RICK MARSHALL, SECRETARY